DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 487 JC 770 310

AUTHOR	Bounds, Stuart M.
TITLE	Assessment of Student Attitudes.
INSTITUTION	Thomas Nelson Community Coll., Hampton, Va.
PUB DATE	9 Jun 77
NOTE	22p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	College Curriculum; *College Environment; College Majors; Community Colleges; *Counseling Services; Educational Resources; Institutional Research; *Junior Colleges; Participant Satisfaction; *Program Attitudes; Rating Scales; School Surveys; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS	Assessment of Student Attitudes Scale

ABSTRACT

A survey was administered to all day, evening, and off-campus students enrolled at Thomas Nelson Community College during the spring quarter of 1977 in order to assess students' attitudes toward their learning environment. The instrument employed was the Assessment of Student Attitudes Scale, which measures attitudes on four subscales: education in general, curriculum, school resources, and counseling. Resultant data were analyzed in aggregate and by respondents' curriculum; mean responses of students were rank-ordered by curriculum for each of the subscales and are presented in tabular form. Overall, students in certificate and diploma programs had the most positive attitudes toward the total learning environment while students in college parallel curricula had the most negative attitudes. The most positive attitudes were those relating to the curriculum subscale. The most negative attitudes were those relating to counseling, the ratings for which were substantially lower than those for any other subscale. It was concluded that an investigation was needed to determine the causes of negative attitudes toward counseling services. The survey instrument is appended. (JDS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED139487

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ATTITUDES

Prepared by
Stuart M. Bounds
Coordinator of Institutional Research

Office of Institutional Research
Thomas Nelson Community College

June 9, 1977

JC 770 310

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLES iii

FIGURES iii

PURPOSE 1

PROCEDURES 2

FINDINGS 4

CONCLUSIONS 15

APPENDIXES

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Survey Respondents by Curriculum	5
2	Characteristics of Respondents and Enrollees	7
3	ASAS Scores by Curriculum	8
4	Curricula Ranked by ASAS Scores	10

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Schematic Plot of ASAS Scores	13

I. PURPOSE

In March 1976, the college established a one-year objective to develop a systematic method of evaluating student satisfaction with its degree, diploma, and certificate programs. In the process of developing a research strategy, it was apparent that a systematic evaluation of student satisfaction should include all aspects of the educational experience at the college, not just the educational programs. Consequently, a survey of student satisfaction was designed to assess the attitudes of students toward the learning environment at the college.

Four attitude dimensions were assessed: attitude toward education in general, attitude toward school curriculum, attitude toward school resources, and attitude toward counseling. A combined assessment of the attitude toward the learning environment was made from these four dimensions.

Beyond the immediate purpose of this research, the college has a long term interest in student attitudes since they are an important indicator of the impact of the learning environment on the students, and the general effectiveness of the educational programs at the college.

II. PROCEDURES

The survey instrument, the Assessment of Student Attitudes Scale (ASAS), was developed by Research for Better Schools, Inc. and had been used in at least one other community college in an effort to assess student attitudes toward their learning environment. The instrument consisted of 26 positive and negative attitude statements divided into four subscales: Education in General (7), Curriculum (5), School Resources (9), and Counseling (5).

The seven items in the Education in General Subscale dealt with the students' general feelings about their entire college experience and the benefits of their education to date, particularly the quality of their learning experience. The five items in the School Curriculum Subscale reflected essentially the degree to which the students felt their learning experience would be useful and would prepare them for a career.

Student perceptions about the quality of the faculty, the facilities, equipment, books, materials, and teaching strategies were incorporated in the nine items making up the School Resources Subscale. The remaining five items which make up the School Counseling Subscale solicited student feelings about the effectiveness of career and personal counseling at the college. The Learning Environment Scale was simply the sum of all the subscales.

The instrument relied on a Likert scaling technique -- a five point scale ranging from stongly disagree to strongly agree -- and yielded scores for each subscale and for the instrument as a whole. Weights of one to

five were assigned respectively to each response item (the weights were reversed for all negative statements) and the score consisted of a weighted mean for all the items in the subscale (scale).

Five additional items were added to the ASAS in order to obtain a description of the respondents and to assess how well they represented the survey universe. The items solicited information on the sex, race, status, curriculum, and age of the respondents.

The survey was administered to all day, evening, on-and-off campus classes during the fifth week of the quarter. Students were asked to complete only one survey instrument and were invited to make any comments they might wish at the end of the instrument.

Weighted means were computed for all curricula and for the entire sample on each of the subscales -- Education in General, Curriculum, Resources, and Counseling -- and for the entire scale -- the Learning Environment. The curricula were then ranked on each set of scores. Finally, a schematic plot was made of the ASAS scores for all respondents.

III. FINDINGS

A total of 2900 valid responses were received at the end of the survey period. The sample represented 65.7% of the 4415 students who were registered for the spring quarter and a somewhat larger, although unknown, proportion of those students who were still attending classes halfway through the quarter.

Table 1 lists the number or respondents in each curriculum and the percentage they made up of the spring quarter curriculum enrollment. In eight instances, curricula had more students in the sample then were officially enrolled. To some extent this was due to confusion on the students' part with respect to their curriculum status and in other cases students may have listed their curriculum goal rather than their current status.

Another major problem was that, as of the winter quarter, all students previously classified as "developmental" were subsequently placed in the curriculum for which they were preparing. Apparently, many students have not as yet made the adjustment since 71 of them still listed their curriculum as "developmental."

For the remaining curricula, the highest response rate was in Fire Science (85%) followed by Clerical Studies (81%), Welding (78%), Occupational Safety and Health (78%), Art Education (75%), Architecture (75%), and Radio and Television (75%). The lowest response rate was in Automotive (38%).

TABLE 1

SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY CURRICULUM

Curriculum	Spring 1977 Headcount	Survey Respondents #	Survey Respondents % of Headcount
ARTE	16	12	75
BUAD	286	194	68
EDUC	126	93	74
ENGR	91	65	71
FNAR	13	20	154
LBAR	199	114	57
SCIE	155	83	54
ACCT	183	126	69
ARCH	60	45	75
BUMT	338	207	61
CMAT	142	85	60
DAPR	211	145	69
DRDE	76	42	55
ELET	175	99	57
FIRE	59	50	85
MARN	42	17	41
MECH	112	45	40
MKTG	53	36	68
NURS	77	149	194
OSHS	54	42	78
PADM	86	60	70
PLCE	181	100	55
SECR	266	165	62
AGES	7	12	171
AUTO	53	20	38
CLST	53	43	81
CORR	4	6	150
COSM	10	10	100
ECDV	24	27	113
EDAS	6	4	67
EDSR	1	8	800
FOOD	28	28	100
MTOP	15	11	73
RDTV	44	33	75
WELD	23	18	78
UNCL	1146	616	54
DEVL	-0-	70	-
TOTAL	4415	2900	66

Respondents are compared to enrollees in Table 2. Generally, the sex and racial characteristics of respondents closely paralleled those of the enrollees. However, respondents were somewhat more likely to be full-time students than were the enrollees. With respect to age, respondents were somewhat older than first-time students in 1975-76 (the only group for which age data is available). Since enrollees are undoubtedly older than first-time students, the sample in all likelihood closely approximates the universe in age. Overall, respondents were generally representative of spring quarter enrollees.

Subscale and scale weighted means are reported for each curriculum, and for unclassified and developmental students, in Table 3. A score of five would be the most positive, a score of three indicated "not sure," and a score of one was the most negative. Therefore, scores from three to five reflect moderately positive to very positive attitudes whereas scores of one to three reflect very negative to moderately negative attitudes.

The curricula are ranked from the most positive attitude score to the most negative attitude score for each subscale and for the scale as a whole in Table 4. Generally, students in the certificate and diploma programs had the most positive attitudes toward all dimensions of the learning environment. These scores, however, may be too sensitive to individual attitudes since the samples in these curricula were quite small. There was no apparent pattern among the lowest scores except that the college parallel curricula typically had the most negative attitudes toward counseling.

TABLE 2

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS AND ENROLLEES

	Respondents	Enrollees
SEX		
Male	52.6%	54.2%
Female	47.4%	45.8%
RACE		
White	67.3%	67.8%
Black	29.7%	28.5%
Other	3.0%	3.7%
STUDENT STATUS		
Full-Time	43.9%	34.2%
Part-Time	56.1%	65.8%
AGE		
21 or under	26.3%	37%
22-24	17.4%	15%
25-45	48.9%	42%
46-64	7.2%	6%
65+	.2%	0%

Note: Data on enrollees are for spring quarter 1977 except for age data; they are for first-time students in 1975-76, the most recent period for which age data are available for any large segment of the enrollment.

TABLE 3

ASAS SCORES BY CURRICULUM

Curricula	Subscale 1 Education in General	Subscale 2 Curriculum	Subscale 3 School Resources	Subscale 4 Counseling	Scale Learning Environment
ARTE	3.40	3.83	3.74	2.68	3.46
BUAD	3.79	3.96	3.77	2.83	3.63
EDUC	3.83	3.89	3.78	2.88	3.65
ENGR	3.64	3.84	3.56	2.71	3.47
FNAR	3.82	3.93	3.86	2.90	3.68
LBAR	3.66	3.72	3.59	2.52	3.42
SCIE	3.62	3.69	3.59	2.64	3.43
ACCT	3.79	4.02	3.71	2.79	3.61
ARCH	3.69	3.92	3.71	2.69	3.54
BUMT	3.78	4.03	3.77	2.84	3.65
CMAT	3.82	3.70	3.69	2.80	3.55
DAPR	3.66	3.85	3.66	2.80	3.54
DRDE	3.77	3.92	3.71	2.82	3.60
FIRE	3.37	3.79	3.39	2.78	3.34
ELET	3.64	3.86	3.60	2.79	3.51
MARN	3.56	3.61	3.82	2.76	3.51
MECH	3.47	3.71	3.47	2.65	3.36
MKTG	3.78	3.97	3.84	3.24	3.73
NURS	3.85	4.05	3.76	2.95	3.68
OSHS	3.80	3.99	3.75	3.06	3.68
PADM	3.91	4.08	3.84	3.14	3.77

TABLE 3--Continued

Curricula	Subscale 1 Education in General	Subscale 2 Curriculum	Subscale 3 School Resources	Subscale 4 Counseling	Scale Learning Environment
PLCE	3.86	4.05	3.81	2.92	3.70
SECR	3.74	4.04	3.73	2.85	3.62
AGES	3.93	3.93	3.76	3.37	3.76
AUTO	3.79	4.12	3.89	3.13	3.76
CLST	3.63	3.90	3.62	2.85	3.53
CORR	3.76	3.76	3.83	3.20	3.68
COSM	3.91	4.18	3.80	3.11	3.78
ECDV	3.73	3.64	3.53	2.85	3.48
EDAS	4.07	4.20	4.17	3.20	3.96
EDSR	3.98	4.23	3.96	3.67	3.99
FOOD	3.97	3.96	3.83	3.30	3.80
MTOP	3.51	3.72	3.55	3.06	3.48
RDTV	3.47	3.72	3.45	2.78	3.38
WELD	4.01	4.05	3.98	3.09	3.63
UNCL	3.71	3.86	3.66	2.88	3.56
DEVL	3.62	3.88	3.72	3.05	3.60
TOTAL	3.73	3.92	3.69	2.85	3.59

Note: The DEVL students listed here include all those who listed developmental as their curriculum (n = 155), even where they also listed another curriculum. Therefore, some students are included in more than one curriculum in this table.

TABLE 4

CURRICULA RANKED BY ASAS SCORES

Rank	Subscale 1 Education in General	Subscale 2 Curriculum	Subscale 3 School Resources	Subscale 4 Counseling	Scale Learning Environment
1	EDAS(4.07)	EDSR(4.23)	EDAS(4.17)	EDSR(3.67)	EDSR(3.99)
2	WELD(4.01)	EDAS(4.20)	WELD(3.98)	AGES(3.37)	EDAS(3.96)
3	EDSR(3.98)	COSM(4.18)	EDSR(3.96)	FOOD(3.30)	FOOD(3.80)
4	FOOD(3.97)	AUTO(4.12)	AUTO(3.89)	MKTG(3.24)	COSM(3.78)
5.	AGES(3.93)	PADM(4.08)	FNAR(3.86)	CORR(3.20)	PADM(3.77)
6.	COSM(3.91)	NURS(4.05)	MKTG(3.84)	EDAS(3.20)	AGES(3.76)
7.	PADM(3.91)	PLCE(4.05)	PADM(3.84)	PADM(3.14)	AUTO(3.76)
8.	PLCE(3.86)	WELD(4.05)	CORR(3.83)	AUTO(3.13)	MKTG(3.73)
9.	NURS(3.85)	SECR(4.04)	FOOD(3.83)	COSM(3.11)	PLCE(3.70)
10.	EDUC(3.83)	BUMT(4.03)	MARN(3.82)	WELD(3.09)	FNAR(3.68)
11.	FNAR(3.82)	ACCT(4.02)	PLCE(3.81)	CTOP(3.06)	NURS(3.68)
12.	CMAT(3.82)	OSHS(3.99)	COSM(3.80)	OSHS(3.06)	OSHS(3.68)
13.	OSHS(3.80)	MKTG(3.97)	EDUC(3.78)	DEVL(3.05)	CORR(3.68)
14.	BUAD(3.79)	FOOD(3.96)	BUAD(3.77)	NURS(2.95)	EDUC(3.65)
15.	ACCT(3.79)	BUAD(3.96)	BUMT(3.77)	PLCE(2.92)	BUMT(3.65)
16.	AUTO(3.79)	FNAR(3.93)	NURS(3.76)	FNAR(2.90)	BUAD(3.63)
17.	BUMT(3.78)	AGES(3.93)	AGES(3.76)	EDUC(2.88)	WELD(3.63)
18.	MKTG(3.78)	DRDE(3.92)	OSHS(3.75)	UNCL(2.88)	SECR(3.62)
19.	DRDE(3.77)	ARCH(3.92)	ARTE(3.74)	SECR(2.85)	ACCT(3.61)
20.	CORR(3.76)	CLST(3.90)	SECR(3.73)	CLST(2.85)	DRDE(3.60)

TABLE 4--Continued

Rank	Subscale 1 Education in General	Subscale 2 Curriculum	Subscale 3 School Resources	Subscale 4 Counseling	Scale Learning Environment
21.	SECR(3.74)	EDUC(3.89)	DEVL(3.72)	ECDV(2.85)	DEVL(3.60)
22.	ECDV(3.73)	DEVL(3.88)	ACCT(3.71)	BUMT(2.84)	UNCL(3.56)
23.	UNCL(3.71)	ELET(3.86)	ARCH(3.71)	BUAD(2.83)	CMAT(3.55)
24.	ARCH(3.69)	UNCL(3.86)	DRDE(3.71)	DRDE(2.82)	ARCH(3.54)
25.	LBAR(3.66)	DAPR(3.85)	CMAT(3.69)	CMAT(2.80)	DAPR(3.54)
26.	DAPR(3.66)	ENGR(3.84)	DAPR(3.66)	DAPR(2.80)	CLST(3.53)
27.	ENGR(3.64)	ARTE(3.83)	UNCL(3.66)	ACCT(2.79)	ELET(3.51)
28.	ELET(3.64)	FIRE(3.79)	CLST(3.62)	ELET(2.79)	MARN(3.51)
29.	CLST(3.63)	CORR(3.76)	ELET(3.60)	FIRE(2.78)	ECDV(3.48)
30.	SCIE(3.62)	MTOP(3.72)	LBAR(3.59)	RDTV(2.78)	MTOP(3.48)
31.	DEVL(3.62)	LBAR(3.72)	SCIE(3.59)	MARN(2.76)	ENGR(3.47)
32.	MARN(3.56)	RDTV(3.72)	ENGR(3.56)	ENGR(2.71)	ARTE(3.46)
33.	MTOP(3.51)	MECH(3.71)	MTOP(3.55)	ARCH(2.69)	SCIE(3.43)
34.	MECH(3.47)	CMAT(3.70)	ECDV(3.53)	ARTE(2.68)	LBAR(3.42)
35.	RTDV(3.47)	SCIE(3.69)	MECH(3.47)	MECH(2.65)	RTDV(3.38)
36.	ARTE(3.40)	ECDV(3.64)	RDTV(3.45)	SCIE(2.64)	MECH(3.36)
37.	FIRE(3.37)	MARN(3.61)	FIRE(3.39)	LBAR(2.52)	FIRE(3.34)

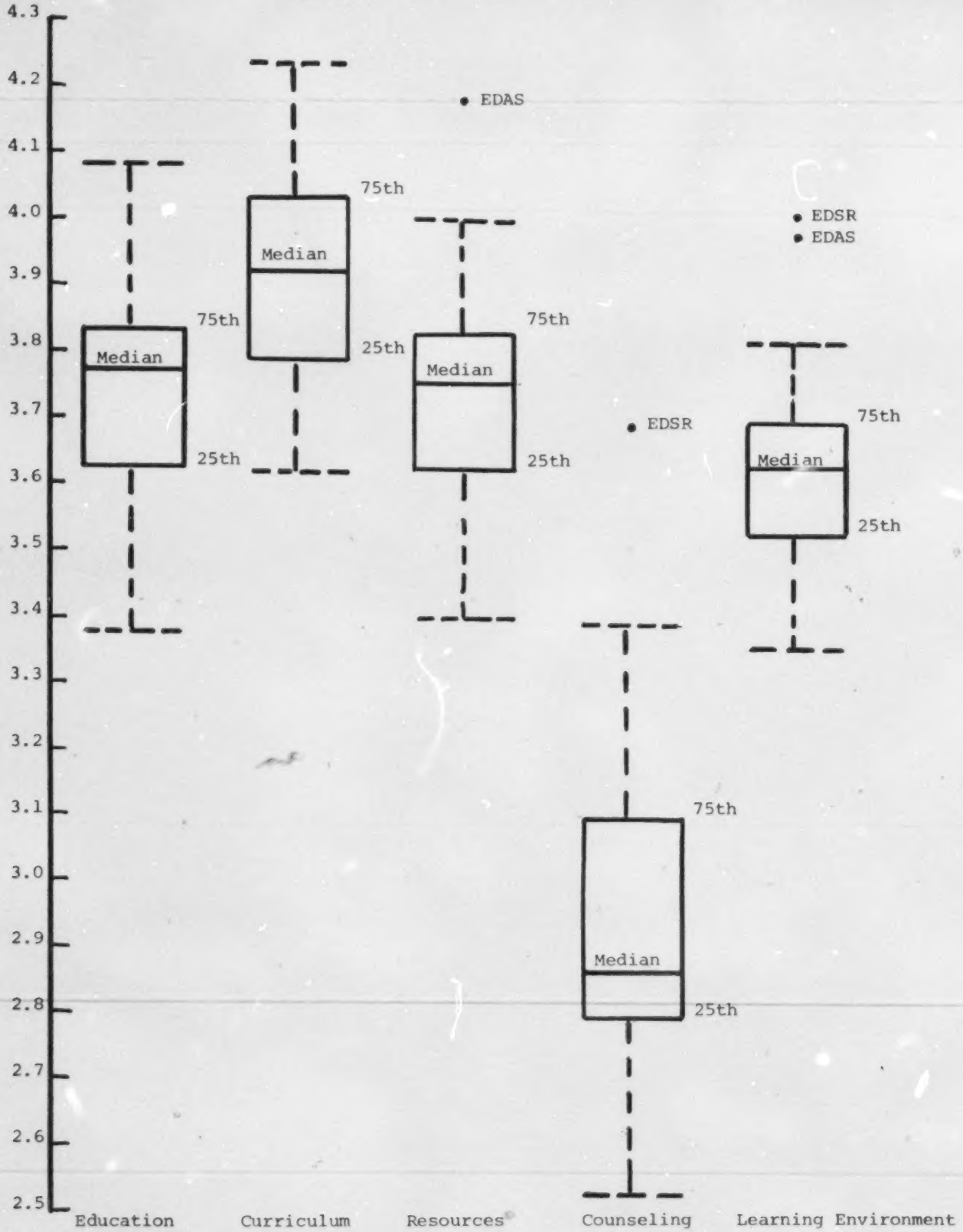
Figure 1 contains a schematic plot of the ASAS scores for all respondents. This graphic representation of the scores for each subscale, and for the scale as a whole depicts the range of the scores, the median, and the 75th and 25th percentiles. In some instances, individual scores will exceed the practical limit in the range and will be placed outside the range as was the case in Resources, Counseling, and Learning Environment. The practical limit is defined as the last data point in the group that is within a value of 1.5 times the mid-spread (the difference between the 75th and 25th percentiles).

The schematic plot reveals that three sets of subscale scores were clustered together -- Education in General, Curriculum, Resources -- while Counseling scores were substantially lower. The Curriculum Subscale had the highest median (3.92) followed by Education in General (3.77) and Resources (3.74). All of these scores reflect a positive attitude ranging from "not sure" to "agree." The Counseling median, however, (2.85) reflects an essentially negative attitude ranging from "not sure" to "disagree."

The median for the Learning Environment (3.61) represents an overall positive attitude although one substantially depressed by the somewhat negative attitude toward counseling.

The Educational Assistant and Educational Secretary curricula represent outside values on the plot since they substantially exceed the practical limit of the range as previously defined. Again, the sample size in these curricula (four and eight respectively) was so small that these values may be too sensitive to individual responses. Of course, another view would be that they represent groups of students with much

FIGURE 1
SCHEMATIC PLOT OF ASAS SCORES



more positive attitudes toward resources, counseling, and the learning environment.

Finally the comments submitted by the students covered the following areas: general remarks about the college (30), counseling (30), instruction (23), library (2), registration (12), equipment and facilities (14), student activities (3), administration (1), programs (39), and the survey (8) On the whole, the positive and negative comments were evenly divided. The most negative comments were received regarding registration (all were negative) and counseling (all but one were negative).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The positive attitudes of students toward education in general, curriculum, school resources and the learning environment as a whole are very encouraging. Of particular interest is the finding that the most positive attitudes were those relating to curriculum. The items in this subscale dealt with students' perceptions of the usefulness of their educational program and the degree to which it would prepare them for a career. Attitudes toward school resources were somewhat less positive than they were for other subscales although a close examination of the items in this subscale reveals that this is due primarily to two items relating to the "use of new materials" and "those who run Thomas Nelson," which had the lowest scores of any of the nine items that made up the subscale (3.31 and 3.39 respectively).

Only the Counseling Subscale elicited a negative score and that score was substantially lower than the other subscale scores. Students in college parallel curricula had the most negative attitude towards counseling, while the students in certificate and diploma programs had a slightly positive attitude.

Moreover, comments submitted by respondents concerning counseling were overwhelmingly negative. Clearly, the negative attitudes toward counseling at TNCC suggest the need for a subsequent investigation to determine the causes. Attention might initially be given to the college

parallel curricula where the problem would seem to be the greatest.

While no attempt has been made here to assess the pattern of scores across divisions or to evaluate the pattern of scores within a curriculum, individual administrators and faculty may want to make such evaluations as part of a larger review of program effectiveness. However, data on student attitudes toward the learning environment become more meaningful when they are available over a period of several years. It may be, therefore, that the college should institute a periodic assessment of student attitudes.

APPENDIX A

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ATTITUDES SCALE

INSTRUCTIONS

It is important to know what students think about various aspects of their educational environment. This questionnaire has been designed to give you an opportunity to express your opinions based on your experience at TNCC in this academic year.

MARK ONLY ON THE ANSWER SHEET PROVIDED. In the space for your name, write in your curriculum (degree, diploma, certificate, developmental, or unclassified). If you are unsure about the name of the curriculum, consult the curriculum list on the back of this questionnaire, fill in one letter (a,b,c,d,e) on the answer sheet which best fits the statement.

USE A #2 OR SOFT LEAD PENCIL ON THE ANSWER SHEET

PERSONAL INFORMATION.	USE THE ALTERNATIVES PROVIDED FOR EACH STATEMENT.
1. Sex:	a. male b. female
2. Race:	a. white b. black c. other
3. Student Status:	a. full-time (enrolled for 12 credits or more)
	b. part-time (enrolled for less than 12 credits)
4. Age:	a. under 21 b. 22-24 c. 25-45 d. 46-64 3. 65 or over

ATTITUDES ABOUT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AT TNCC. USE THE FOLLOWING ALTERNATIVES FOR ALL STATEMENTS:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a	b	c	d	e

5. There is a great deal being taught at Thomas Nelson that is useful for me as a person.
6. The faculty at Thomas Nelson do not seem to know enough about what they're teaching.
7. The facilities at Thomas Nelson are old and out-dated.
8. I've learned a lot from my college program.
9. My college counseling program has shown me some interesting things about different careers.
10. My college has a lot of books and equipment that I can use to help myself to learn.
11. The experiences I get in my college learning sessions have not really helped me to learn.
12. Most of the courses at Thomas Nelson are useful.
13. There are very few people in my college that I can go to when I have a personal problem.
14. I'd say Thomas Nelson was really worthwhile.
15. My college does not have very good equipment to help learning.
16. The counseling program at Thomas Nelson has been good to me.
17. I used many new materials to help me in my college work.
18. Thomas Nelson uses a variety of ways to help us to learn -- not just a classroom and a teacher.
19. Some of the ideas I've gotten at Thomas Nelson have helped me to get interested in some new areas.
20. College has always been boring -- I can hardly wait until I'm out.
21. Education, even vocational education, doesn't help with your job when you leave college.
22. My parents (spouse) are not very excited about the education I am getting.
23. My college program has not been very good.
24. Much of what I learn at Thomas Nelson can be used in a job.
25. I like Thomas Nelson because I learn a lot of new things there.
26. The people who run Thomas Nelson probably do not enjoy what they're doing.
27. Not much of the advice I have gotten at Thomas Nelson has helped me to decide on what I want for my future.
28. My college's counseling program isn't really helping me get ready for things I'll do after I graduate.
29. The instructors I've had at Thomas Nelson have not been very interesting.
30. Thomas Nelson is not doing enough to prepare me for the life I'll lead after I finish.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

APPENDIX B

ASAS SUBSCALE ITEMS

Subscale	Item
1. Attitude toward Education in General	8
	19
	20*
	22*
	23*
	25
	30*
2. Attitude toward School Curriculum	5
	11*
	12
	21*
	24
3. Attitude toward School Resources	6*
	7*
	10
	14
	15*
	17
	18
	26*
	29*
4. Attitude toward School Counseling	9
	13*
	16
	27*
	28*

*Negative student statement; reversed for scoring.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JUL 15 1977

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES